



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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The Town of Moultonborough prepared and adopted its first Master Plan in 1982. In 1991 the Town engaged in a comprehensive update of that plan. This current master planning effort looks back to both of these earlier Master Plans for reference and guidance as it looks again into the future. In such a process it is important, first of all, to understand what a Master Plan is, and as importantly, what it is not.

### WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

As described in state statutes,<sup>1</sup> a Master Plan is a set of statements and land use and development principles that give legal standing to ordinances adopted to implement the Plan, as well as to other Planning Board actions. It is important to note that a Master Plan is NOT a legally binding document; however, without it, the zoning ordinance lacks legal standing.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A MASTER PLAN?

The purpose of a Master Plan is to “set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the planning board, to aid the board in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of New Hampshire, and to guide the board in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, a Master Plan forms the vision for the future, which is then implemented through zoning and other land use regulations and policies. By statute, the Master Plan must contain at least a land

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<sup>1</sup> RSA 674:2, II.

<sup>2</sup> RSA 674: 2, I.

use section and vision statements; it may contain any of an additional 14 sections described in the statute. A Master Plan may contain text, maps, charts, reports, or any other form of information organized and presented so that, together, they portray the future vision of the town. To do this, public participation is essential, and for this reason, the public component is required by state statute; but beyond holding required public meetings and hearings, towns are free to develop their own public participation process and approaches.

A Master Plan should be more than just a litany of facts and figures. A Master Plan should also highlight the collective wishes, desires and aspirations of the members of the community regarding growth and development – in other words, a Vision for the Future.

The various elements of a Master Plan are connected to and mutually reinforce each other and, thus, the success of one element relates directly to the success of others, such as land use to economic development, transportation to land use, preservation to community character.

## THE PROCESS

The current 2008 Master Plan Update began in 2007 with the establishment of a Master Plan Steering Committee and five work groups, each charged with a special topic area. The process involved extensive committee work; the consideration of a number of reports and planning studies, including the two previous master plans mentioned above; and public input. In the development of a master plan, there are generally three stages:

- (1) Data collection and analysis.
- (2) Development of vision statements that reflect public input and data.
- (3) Development of goals, objectives or action items that are intended to implement the Vision of the Town. This Plan also contains an Implementation Matrix that sets forth in summary the numerous action items in the plan, describes how these will be accomplished, who is will be responsible, and a time frame for their completion.

In Moultonborough the Steering Committee oversees the entire process and agrees to the final draft before it goes to the Planning Board. By law, it is the Planning Board that holds public hearing(s) and votes to adopt the Master Plan.

One of the most challenging aspects of developing a Master Plan is keeping it “alive” and in front of the town officials and the public. This effort attempts to do that by use of the Implementation Matrix and a so-called “Flip Book”. It is important to do this so that developments over time can be reviewed against the vision of the Master Plan. While, as noted above, a Town cannot regulate with a Master Plan, it is helpful to know whether the proper regulations and policies have been put in place to encourage consistency with the Master Plan. If not, then the town officials know that changes need to be made.

## PLAN FORMAT

This Plan is organized as follows: There are seven individual chapters that reflect the concerns and interests of the residents of Moultonborough over time, as noted through various studies and surveys; and each chapter contains recommendations specific to that topic. Chapter II contains a vision section that is required by the master planning statutes. There are overall Vision Statements that apply town-wide, followed by the individual vision statements, goals and action items for each topic area of the Master Plan. For the purposes of this Plan, a Vision represents the larger view of an issue; a Goal is something the Town strives toward; and Action Items (also referred to as objectives) are the specific steps needed to implement the Visions and the Goals.

The last part of this Master Plan is an Implementation Matrix (Chapter X) that takes all of the visions, goals and action items of all the work groups, delegates a responsible party, and outlines an expected time frame for completion. This matrix will help Town officials and residents alike monitor the implementation of the Master Plan – although it is a statement of intent and is non-binding on local government decision makers.